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HOW ABSURD CAN A NOMENCLATURAL PROPOSAL BE?

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BOTANISTS who are interested in plants as living things and not as pretexts for legalistic juggling of nomenclature are becoming increasingly exasperated with the growing amount of attention paid in our congresses and in our journals to hair-splitting and often superficial interpretations of the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature, whose basic reason for existence is precisely to standardize nomenclature and make such quibbling unnecessary. We would be the first to recognize that rules and regulations are essential for the standardization of nomenclature, yet we rebel at the threat that the activity of other taxonomists become more and more subservient to the confusion wrought by those whose only interest in plants seems to be the legalism surrounding the clarification of their proper naming.

TAXON, the journal of the International Association for Plant Taxonomy, has recently been given over largely to articles on nomenclature by individuals and committees. It is with one part of a recent article that we wish to deal in this note, our primary purpose being to point out one of the many absurdities which our congresses are being asked to consider. We refer to the "Report of the Committee for Spermatophyta. Conservation of generic

names I'' in Taxon 7 (1958) 184-193. In this report, we find the following proposal for conservation of the name of an orchid genus:

1533. *Bletilla* Reichenb.f. (1851) vs. *Jimensia* (Raf.) (1838) (6-2) (Syn. Prop. Stockholm 223.)

Bletilla has recently been recognized as a distinct genus with some 6 species. Rafinesque's name has never been used. To adopt it would necessitate new combinations.

Even a superficial reading of this proposal is enough to frighten and shock the average botanist into the realization of the lack of seriousness and thoroughness which is unfortunately becoming more common in the work of those whose main interest apparently is to regulate, no matter on how trivial a point, the work of their colleagues who are concerned with the study of plants.

Reichenbach described *Bletilla* in 1853, giving the concept a very appropriate name suggestive of a resemblance to *Bletia*; the same concept, however, had been recognized and adequately treated thirteen years earlier by Rafinesque under the name *Jimensia*. Rafinesque's treatment (Fl. Tellur. 4 (1836) 38) is clear:

909. *Jimensia* R. (Jap. bot.) Petalis ovatis concavis, 2 internis, label. trifido emarg. basi callis 2 obl. medio concavo, col. filif. incurva, stig. bifid. concavo, antheris 2 dorsalis, capsula clavata. Scaposa, fol. gladiatis, fl. spicatis—Type *J. nervosa* R. *Limodorum striatum* Th. fl. jap. scapo angulato, fol. rad. glad. nervosis, fl. cernuis, bracteatis. Japan, fl. yellow. The G. *Limodorum* contained many anomalies also, sp. with or without spurs, beards or no beards, many kinds of pillars or styles or clinandres &c.

In 1950, before the Stockholm Congress, a Japanese botanist proposed the conservation of *Bletilla*. This proposal was not acted upon in Stockholm. It did not appear in the Paris proposals. Now, the name has been resurrected and proposed for conservation once again, with the most amazing reason: "Rafinesque's name has never been used. To adopt it would necessitate new com-

binations.” Is it conceivable that a committee of botanists would suggest deviation from the basic rule of priority because an earlier name had not been used or because several new combinations might result? Naturally, most conservative botanists try to resist altering nomenclature in the cases of very large genera or in generic names which have been long or widely used in economic botany or horticulture, but the genus under question is neither large nor of economic or horticultural importance.

Reichenbach's concept included two different entities. He listed two species in the genus, *Bletilla florida* from the New World and *B. gebinae* from the Old World. It is now recognized that *Bletilla florida* belongs in the genus *Bletia*. Rafinesque's concept is concerned only with the true *Bletilla* element, an additional cause for taking up his name for the concept, which would have been obvious if those responsible for this proposal had any knowledge of the plants involved.

In order to forestall absurd and unnecessary legislative action, we herewith make the appropriate transfers to the genus *Jimensia*:

***Jimensia formosana* (*Hayata*) *Garay* & *R. E. Schultes* comb. nov.**

Bletia formosana Hayata Mat. Fl. Formos. (1911) 323.

Bletilla formosana (Hayata) Schltr. in Fedde Rep. 10 (1911) 256.

***Jimensia kotoensis* (*Hayata*) *Garay* & *R. E. Schultes* comb. nov.**

Bletia kotoensis Hayata Mat. Fl. Formos. (1911) 325.

Bletilla kotoensis (Hayata) Schltr. in Fedde Rep. 10 (1911) 256.

***Jimensia morrisonicola* (*Hayata*) *Garay* & *R. E. Schultes* comb. nov.**

Bletia morrisonicola Hayata Mat. Fl. Formos. (1911) 324.

Bletilla morrisonicola (Hayata) Schltr. in Fedde Rep. 10 (1911) 256.

Jimensia ochracea (Schltr.) Garay & R.E. Schultes
comb. nov.

Bletilla ochracea Schltr. in Fedde Rep. 12 (1913) 105.

Jimensia scopulorum (W.W.Sm.) Garay & R.E.
Schultes comb. nov.

Pleione scopulorum W.W.Sm. in Notes R. Bot. Gard. Edinb. (1921) 218.

Bletilla scopulorum (W. W. Sm.) Schltr. in Fedde Rep. 19 (1924) 375.

Jimensia sinensis (Rolfe) Garay & R.E. Schultes
comb. nov.

Arethusa sinensis Rolfe in Journ. Linn. Soc. Bot. 36 (1903) 46.

Bletilla sinensis (Rolfe) Schltr. in Fedde Rep. 10 (1911) 256.

Bletilla chinensis Schltr. Die Orchideen (1914) 107
sphalm.

Jimensia striata (Thunb.) Garay & R.E. Schultes
comb. nov.

Limodorum striatum Thunb. Fl. Jap. (1784) 28.

Epidendrum tuberosum Lour. Fl. Coch. (1790) 523.

Epidendrum striatum (Thunb.) Thunb. in Trans. Linn. Soc. pt. 2 (1790) 327.

Cymbidium striatum (Thunb.) Sw. in Nov. Act. Upsal. 6 (1797) 77.

Cymbidium hyacinthinum Sm. Exot. Bot. 1 (1804) 117.

Gyas humilis Salisb. in Trans. Hort. Soc. 1 (1812) 300.

Bletia hyacinthina (Sm.) R. Br. in Ait. Hort. Kew., ed. 2, 5 (1813) 206.

Jimensia nervosa Raf. Fl. Tellur. 4 (1836) 38.

Bletia gebina Lindl. in Journ. Hort. Soc. 2 (1847) 307.

Bletilla gebinae (Lindl.) Rchb.f. in Fl. Serres, ser. 1, 8 (1853) 246.

Calanthe gebinae (Lindl.) Lodd. ex Rchb.f. in Fl. Serres, ser. 1, 8 (1853) 246.

Bletilla striata (Thunb.) Rchb.f. in Bot. Zeit. 36 (1878) 75.

***Jimensia szetschuanica* (Schltr.) Garay & R. E. Schultes comb. nov.**

Bletilla szetschuanica Schltr. in Fedde Rep. Beih. 12 (1922) 344.

***Jimensia yunnanensis* (Schltr.) Garay & R. E. Schultes comb. nov.**

Bletilla yunnanensis Schltr. in Fedde Rep. Beih. 12 (1922) 343.

Bletilla yunnanensis (Schltr.) var. *Limprichtii* Schltr. in Fedde Rep. Beih. 12 (1922) 344.

EXCLUDED SPECIES

Bletilla florida Rchb.f. in Fl. Serres, ser. 1, 8 (1853) 246 = *Bletia florida* R. Br.

Bletilla japonica (A. Gray) Schltr. in Fedde Rep. 10 (1911) 256 = *Arethusa japonica* A. Gray.